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News Release

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New Brunswick Human Rights Commission

Dec. 10 is International Human Rights Day (07/12/06)

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FREDERICTON (CNB) - The following statement was issued by Dr. Gordon L. Porter, chair of the Human Rights Commission:

"On Monday, we will be celebrating International Human Rights Day, the anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Dec. 10, 1948.

"As New Brunswickers, we can all be proud that one of the principal authors of the declaration was the late Dr. John Peters Humphrey, a native of Hampton. In 1946 he established the United Nations Division for Human Rights, and in 1947 he prepared a 400-page background paper for the proposed Universal Declaration, and wrote its first draft. He went on to make many other contributions in the field of human rights throughout his life.

"This was a special year for the Human Rights Commission, a year in which we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the New Brunswick Human Rights Act and of the commission. We marked these milestones with a forum on Sept. 24, to which close to 200 people attended from throughout the province to learn and discuss the past, present and future of human rights in New Brunswick.

"At the forum, the commission presented the 2007 New Brunswick Human Rights Award to Senate Speaker Noël A. Kinsella. It was Kinsella's research that led to the adoption of the Human Rights Act in 1967. With the act, New Brunswick became only the second jurisdiction in Canada to have a human rights commission. Kinsella was the commission chair during its first 22 years.

"Physical disability and mental disability are the most common grounds of discrimination in complaints filed with the Human Rights Commission. So, I was pleased that Canada signed the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on March 30. The Commission continues to focus on the issue of accommodating persons with a disability. On Oct. 15, we released an important guideline on accommodating students with a disability, only the second of its kind in Canada.

"The commission promotes a greater understanding of how human rights values such as respect, appreciation of diversity and freedom from discrimination and harassment. We are confident that through these and other efforts we can help New Brunswick be a better place to live and a place where immigrants from other countries and cultures will choose to make their homes.

"Current issues such as accommodation of people with a disability and the attraction and retention of immigrants illustrate the continuing importance of human rights for New Brunswickers today.

"As we look forward to celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2008, I would like to invite New Brunswickers to celebrate our human rights legacy and to continue to promote values that ensure that everyone feels welcome and respected here and is able to fully participate in our society."

07/12/06

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